



2010 Chairman's Address
The Honorable Don Stapley
Maricopa County Board of Supervisors
January 7, 2010

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board for this honor: Fulton, Andy, Max, and Mary Rose. I remain grateful for your confidence, especially in these times of turmoil and unrest. Your support and counsel will be crucial to me this year. My staff, Susan Schuerman and my Chief of Staff James Candland are simply the best.

I also must acknowledge my family. It has been a challenging year for us. My wife, Kathy, has been a constant support and has handled the many challenges with grace and dignity. Kathy, I love you and could not carry on without your support.

Kathy and I have 4 wonderful children and 7 terrific grandchildren. We also have great parents who are here today as well. My family, four generations, each at different phases in their lives, helps me to better understand – through their eyes and in a very personal way – the diverse hopes, dreams and needs of everyone in Maricopa County. They give me love and they give me insight into the world. I hope to bring some of that – an empathy for others – to this job. Would all members of my family please stand and be recognized. Thanks to all of you.

At this time I'd also like to thank my close friends and supporters who have walked this road with me over the past 16 years, and thank them for their loyalty, their strength and their trust. I am honored and humbled by your continuing friendship.

Max, I know that I am speaking for everyone when I say that with your decency, you have elevated the position of chairman and you have set the bar high for the rest of us.

Let's be honest, 2009 was a year of challenges and a year of unprecedented turbulence. We needed a steady hand to guide us. Some people lead with soaring rhetoric; others with boundless energy or consuming ambition. You brought dignity and strength to the office and a reliable, steady hand steering the rudder, to get us through the stormiest of seas.

We thank you for your leadership and dedication to us, the county, as an institution and the people it represents. Now, it is time to look forward.

I don't take this task casually, or as an entitlement as if it's simply my turn. Given the nature of the times, and the circumstances of this moment, I would like to share some of what I hope for, my vision for the coming year with all of you.

And I do not make this commitment lightly. This is a promise.



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I assume this position with dedication, determination and a generous spirit. I will endeavor to safeguard the supervisors' authority to set policy, to manage the fiscal affairs with the taxpayer and customer in mind.

I will fight for the county's rightful role in federal, state, and local governance. I will fight for what is right but not just fight. We have had enough of fighting. If all we do is fight, then we will be left too weary and too divided to make progress on the broad challenges we face.

I seek to set policy, solve problems, by bringing people together; not to settle scores.

I pledge not to do anything to aggravate or prolong the bitterness and mistrust that has soured Maricopa County in recent months.

I will meet regularly with all county elected officers and listen with respect to their concerns.

I say this today, but hope to follow this pattern for a long time, but I will need their help also in meeting this important goal.

I am much more willing to break precedents than promises. And mine is a promise.

Our traditional county mission is to provide responsible leadership so that our residents can enjoy living in a healthy and safe community. With that as a guide, I have established goals for my chairmanship in the upcoming year. I will focus my efforts as chairman on three areas that I feel will have the greatest impact.

- The Fiscal Challenges Ahead;
- Energy Conservation and Green Government Initiative; and
- Updating Our Strategic Plan That Will Guide Our Future.

In 2009, we saw and experienced troubles within state and local governments that are unprecedented in my lifetime. Nevertheless, I have great hopes for 2010.

I hold out hope because we have no other options than facing our problems with realism and determination. And yes, with courage.

Problems don't get solved by wishing them away.

They don't get solved by rhetoric.



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Governments everywhere must find better ways to meet the needs of our citizens. We must be prepared to discard outmoded thinking.

We need to do it right.

If we do not – and just as crucial, if the State does not – we will all suffer for many years, if not decades, to come. This is, in short, a very important year.

Maricopa County has done a great job over the past 5 years leading up to and during this recession. We benefitted from the “good times” of many years, but we did not take them for granted. Unlike many governments who are in trouble, we kept spending in check and we conserved the temporary windfall. We also responded quickly and effectively to the downturn. We anticipated it, and we cut expenditures accordingly – \$142 million during the last fiscal year. As a result, we’re better off than most governmental entities. The economic crisis is not over, but thanks to our prudent stewardship, I believe that we can avoid significant cuts in departmental budgets during the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Let me repeat: if left to our own resources, I believe we can avoid any significant cuts in department budgets during the next fiscal year. That is our intention. That is our goal.

And I believe this can be done with NO property tax increase.

Of course, county government is a subdivision of state government. We are not the complete masters of our destiny. We can’t stay in the black if the state chooses to balance its budget on our backs. It will be a real challenge to keep the state’s hands out of our pockets.

Governor Jan Brewer, who sat on this board for 6 years, has assured all of us that she will do her best to protect local governments. We thank her for that promise. We thank her for her insight into the crucial role of local governments.

Even though our financial situation has stabilized and we have a Governor who promises to protect us from State raids on our coffers, we must continue to look for ways in which we can better manage our own financial house. We have identified a number of exciting opportunities.

Energy is one of our most important resources and a significant part of our expenditures: about \$20 million per year, in utility costs. Recently, we partnered with the private sector to evaluate over nine million square feet of county owned space. The overall objective was to reduce energy and water use. In addition to being “greener,” we can avoid utility costs of \$1.74 million per year with a simple payback of 15 years on the capital investment. This is a



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great win for the taxpayer and the environment, and I look forward to implementing this project immediately.

During my year as Chairman, I would also like to propose and explore a new and innovative approach to partnering with the private sector. We have many thousands of acres of vacant land owned by the Flood Control District - the majority as catchment basins to hold back flood waters. They are not unused, but they are underutilized.

My proposal would enable solar energy companies to use these areas to harness the sun's power to produce clean sustainable solar energy. This would be a dual but compatible use.

My vision is that we would generate both revenue for the county and non-polluting energy for Arizona and the world. We can do this while maintaining the important mission of the flood control district. Maricopa County should and must become the Persian gulf of solar generated electricity.

Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden has said: "failing to plan is planning to fail."

In recent years, county manager David Smith has prodded and pushed our efforts to look ahead and look for new and better ways. The future is always part of the present at Maricopa County.

Yes, right now, the future seems uncertain. We are in an era of enormous economic anxiety. The public feels a mounting and troubling frustration with traditional institutions, including governments.

Many would shrink from public service at such a moment. I welcome it.

As long as we have the people in this room and in county government with me, our future will be bright.

We set these Strategic Priorities and goals as a foundation to provide direction for the organization. We will focus on strengthening communities, promoting public health, offering regional leadership, guiding sustainable development, maintaining fiscal strength, building and rewarding a quality workforce, and earning citizen satisfaction.

The Board recently met in a Strategic Planning session with David Smith, and other county leaders, and outlined new goals and priorities that will guide our efforts from 2010 to 2015. Among these new priorities are directions to include: economic objectives, budget issues,



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population flows, the justice system, health and human services, sustainable environment and infrastructure, as well as ideas for innovative, responsive and efficient government.

We will be seeking the input and advice from citizens, employees as well as the other elected officials in Maricopa County.

I would ask that these priorities be determined and refined into specific, challenging goals. I then ask that these be presented and adopted by the board during the first quarter of 2010.

These goals and priorities will provide us with measurements and guidelines that will help us to manage and operate our organization in changing, challenging times. The mission remains the same: to provide the citizens of Maricopa County with the best and most effective services.

Maricopa County has maintained some of the best fiscal management practices of any local government in the United States. We have been named one of the best run counties in America. Our nationally recognized County Manager, David Smith, continues to lead us into a new decade with new hopes and new visions. We will continue that focus even in the face of troubling economic and political challenges.

We have one of the lowest property tax rates of any large urban county in the nation, and the citizens ought to be proud of the way this county is managed with a pay-as-you go financing model. I would like to commend all the employees of Maricopa County, as well as our management for pressing forward with a positive agenda over the past year of budget cuts and financial uncertainty. Our employees; through the rewarding ideas program saved the county over \$1.3 million dollars last year alone. Truly, our Employees are our greatest asset.

Now, we don't know what the future will hold with respect to the economic downturn – but one thing is for certain: we still have a job to do, and Maricopa County will continue to provide the best and most cost effective services that government can provide. One of the hallmarks of our success has been our fiscally conservative approach to solving community issues and funding our mandated services. We are very serious about ensuring that we get both value for the money we spend; and keeping our taxes as low as possible. Those continue to be the main priorities of the board and county management.

It is a daunting agenda, I know, even more so given the frustrations and divisions of the past year.

But Arizona has always been a cradle of opportunity in a nation of promise. Our founding fathers didn't have it easy. Some places you can just settle in. But in Arizona, we had to endure against many obstacles and overcome discouraging, disheartening setbacks.



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Nevertheless, throughout our history, we have made our state and this valley, a better place to live, work, and play.

I take comfort in that history and the heroic stories from other places.

Some years ago, my wife and I visited South Africa to meet our son who was completing his 2 year church mission there. It was then I came to understand more deeply the history of that nation and the towering presence of their newly elected president Nelson Mandela. I believe he will be counted among the greatest leaders of the 20th century. His courage, leadership, and capacity for forgiveness are becoming more familiar to Americans in recent times with the release of the film "Invictus." Invictus, in the dictionary, is defined as indestructible.

It was from him that I came to appreciate the words of the poem by that same name, written by William Ernest Henley. Let these profound and eloquent lines inspire us all.

***In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.***

***It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the
scroll.
I am the master of my fate.
I am the captain of my soul.***

We are all, each one of us, the masters of our fate and the captains of our souls. Together, by our united determination, we will see it through to a better good, and a better Maricopa County.

Thank you, God bless you, God bless Arizona and Maricopa County.